

RESTORING A SENSE OF Home

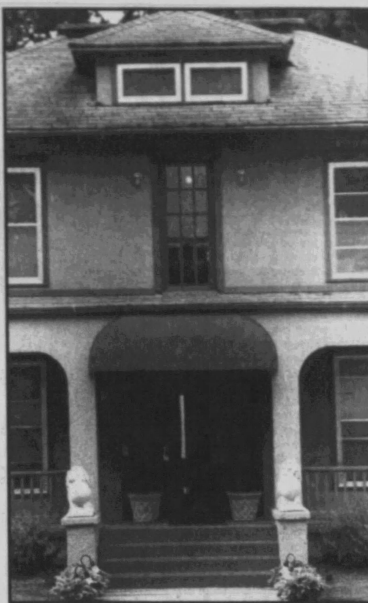
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Staff Writer

■ For Michael Cody, converting her 92-year-old home from an apartment complex to a bed and breakfast has been a labor of love. But it hasn't been easy. ■ She bought the three-story building at 617 Houston in September, 1996. It was divided into five separate apartments; she has converted it into a bed and breakfast, spending an estimated \$300,000 in the process. ■ Today, two floors of the home — now known as The Colt House — have been restored to its early-day appearance. Lace curtains, ornate oak woodwork and antiques fill the rooms. And the third floor is a work in progress. ■ Lots of work.

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The Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance has awarded several area homeowners for the work they have done to keep up their historic abodes. **Right:** Michael Cody, owner of The Colt House Inn, 617 Houston, was awarded Best of the Best. **Top right:** Richard J. Hill, 521 Osage, won the Best Whole Building Restoration award. **Top left:** Wayde and Lillian Byrd won Best Infill in Private Neighborhood for their home at 815 Houston.

Photos by Rod Mikinski



Historic local homes win preservation awards

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Thursday night, though, the effort paid off. The home received two historic preservation awards, including the "Best of the Best" award, presented by the Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance, a private, not-for-profit volunteer organization. The house also won first place for best adaptive use.

"It was very emotional for me," Cody said of the award. "It was very exciting."

There were 53 local buildings nominated for awards. This is the first year the local organization has given out the awards, said Jean Bigbey Hill, the alliance's president. She said the 20 awards were designed to recognize the efforts of those preserving older buildings in the community.

"It was something we'd talked about for a long time," Hill said. "We wanted to recognize those in the community who are doing a nice job

of taking care of their home, updating the older homes."

Hill said The Colt House won because of how far the house has come.

"It was resurrected from the dead," she said. "The Colt House is such a glowing example of what can be done."

And, she emphasized, the work on The Colt House has been done with private money — no grants from the city or other agencies, just a personal commitment by the owner.

The contest, Hill said, wasn't scientific by any means but more a way to highlight some of the work going on in the community — and encourage others to do the same. She said many of the owners didn't know their property was nominated, and judges made their evaluations strictly from the outside of the buildings — partly to keep the property owners' and judges' headaches to a minimum. Otherwise, judges would have been in and out of 53 buildings.

"That would have been a lot to ask of the homeowners," Hill said.

Among those honored were owners who had built new structures in older areas — called "infills" — and made them architecturally compatible with the existing homes in a historic area. The Wayde and Lillian Byrd home at 815 Houston won first for best infill in a private neighborhood.

Lillian Byrd said the two-story home was built in 1992, emphasizing keeping it similar architecturally to others in the neighborhood. She said it wouldn't have been fair to the neighbors if they'd constructed something that didn't fit well.

For this, the first year of the awards, the alliance considered buildings that were renovated within the past five years or so. For future contests, the time span will be two years, Hill said. They're also considering a "best maintained home" category.

Judges for the event weren't active members of the alliance, Hill said.

The three were Ray Weisenburger, on the state preservation board and a member of the Kansas State University architecture faculty; architect Barbara Anderson, a preservation consultant; and Martha Miller, a community volunteer with an interest in historic architecture and art history.

If the contest catches on in future years, organizers hope to have more entrants.

The other awards, along with the owners of the property, were:

•**Best whole-house restoration:** First, Mel and Jan Borst, 1918 Humboldt; second, Ron and Dixie West, 1014 Houston; and third (tie), Ron and Tracey Jackson, 611 Houston, and Allen and Lori Archer, 629 Houston.

•**Best whole-building restoration:** First, Richard J. Hill, 521 Osage; second, 1201 Moro/815 N. 12th, Gwyn Riffel, as well as Lowman's Men's Store, with owner Bill Lowman, and the 12th Street Pub, with owners Mike Robinson and Tyler Olson; and third,

1219 Moro, Gwyn Riffel, as well as Java Express and Bakery, with owner Mark Skochdopole.

•**Best addition to a historic home:** First, Steve Lee and Nancy Raleigh, 319 N. Fifth; second, Steve and Mary Heller, 311 N. 14th; and Leland and Ann Warren, 830 Pierre.

•**Best addition to a historic building:** First, First Congregational Church, 700 Poyntz; and second, First Lutheran Church, 900 Poyntz.

•**Best adaptive use:** First, Michael Cody, Colt House Inn Bed and Breakfast, 617 Houston; second, Robert Littrell, Littrell Law Office, 900 Poyntz; and third, Kevin and Kurstin Pierce, Fairchild Inn, 417 N. 17th.

•**Best infill in a private neighborhood:** First, Wayde and Lillian Byrd, 815 Houston; and second, David and Brenda Bly, 416 Moro.

•**Best infill in a public neighborhood:** First, Ron Hill, 1126 Moro, and The Futon Store, with owner Bill Kaszer.